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### An Open Letter to The Independent

Canyon, Ferry, Mont., Feb. 6, '05.  
Editor Helena Independent:

Dear Sir: Some time ago I received from a friend in Helena, a copy of the Independent of January 16 with a marked editorial under the caption, "A Call of the Wild."

As it is partly truth, and partly error or deliberate falsehood—I will be charitable and say it is the former—and may therefore mislead the unwary, in the name of justice and fair play, I demand, for others and myself therein misrepresented, space in the Independent for reply to the same. Failing this, I shall be compelled to expose the editor of the Independent as a deliberate spreader of falsehood and deception.

I would have answered this letter sooner, but had not yet received the manifesto therein mentioned. I now call on the Independent to publish this letter or that manifesto or stand convicted of deliberate deception.

I shall pass over the implied insult to Jack London in the title, considering only the contents.

"One of the fundamental difficulties of unionism is inability to consider conditions apart from men or classes of men."

The editor of the Independent may possibly have heard of "reduction ad absurdum" which comes in quite handy here. We will assume that the unions "consider conditions apart from men or classes of men." Why? Because they hire to "conditions" and not to "men or classes of men"—absurd! They hire to men or classes of men and not to conditions, therefore they should "consider men or classes of men" and not "conditions."

The only conditions I can find "apart from men or classes of men" are natural conditions, and, as the capitalist has already considered these and fixed his prices and his workmen's wages accordingly, it is unnecessary for us to consider these; all we need to consider is how much he takes from us above the cost of production. If the editor means eliminate conditions it is absurd. It is evident he does not speak of the farmers, whose employment is regulated by climatic conditions for they are not organized. Do the great industries stop for rains, snows, shines or blows? Of course not, they run night and day, regardless of weather, till they have produced more than the workers can buy with their wages, when they are closed down by "men or classes of men," the capitalist owners.

"It (trade unionism) will berate employers with never a thought of the essential laws of economy, of supply and demand, of trade equilibrium which govern employees."

This was true of the old trade unionism, and is yet true of the "pure and simple" unions, but the new unionism, the only kind the editor of the Independent fears enough to take notice of, berates no employer except as he upholds this system that is essentially a producer of masters and slaves, knowing full well that he must be what he is or be himself reduced to the ranks of the workers—to wage slavery. And these laws of economy of supply and demand, that the Socialists have at last forced the acknowledgment of even out of the editor of the Independent, are just what the new unionism is built on. Mind the editor says that these laws "govern" employees. The definition of govern is: That power that one

person or thing exercises over another. He acknowledges that these laws have power over employees, therefore the employees are not free agents to make contracts as to work or wages, but are forced by these laws (economic determinism) to accept certain conditions—the same thing Socialists have always claimed. "It 'listens good' to prate about 'wage slavery' and the 'centralization of wealth' but why cannot the friends of organized labor look judiciously at the purpose and limitation of all legitimate efforts in the line of commercial and financial activity."

"As to 'wage slavery,' the editor of the Independent seems to object to our calling a spade a spade, perhaps, for the benefit of his esthetic readers, he would have us call it an unclean instrument employed in the art of agriculture for compounding fertilizers. But I believe he is mistaken as to the tastes of the readers of the Independent; I believe they prefer their own colloquial English, Classic, Rocky Mountain United States—to any imported Johnny Bostonbeans straining after effect. The question is, Are the workers slaves? If they are, let us face the fact, not try to hide from it—ostrich tactics of sticking our heads in the sand won't help matters.

We of the new unionism—not only the friends of organized labor, but the laborers ourselves—have looked "judiciously" at the purpose and limitations of all legitimate efforts in the line of commercial and financial activity, and discovering that they are the making of profits and nothing else, judiciously can find no justice in them. There is no justice in taking the product of a man's labor without an equivalent whether it is done by force of muscle, at the point of a revolver or by force of necessity.

"Legitimate" is a good word to conjur with, but it simply means lawful and takes no cognizance of right or justice. As laws are sanctioned by a majority they can be unmade by this same majority, and what is legitimate today is illegitimate tomorrow.

"The wage system as it is practiced in America today is as essential a feature of the conduct of business as the division of profits on a basis of investments is vital to the management of trade." Sure! It is as necessary to the existence of a robber gang that there be people to rob as it is that the robbers divide the "swag," and I should think a great deal more so.

"A workers wage or salary is his prorata, based on the value of work (he means labor power) as established by supply and demand. It is his 'dividend' fixed by the value and cost of what he 'puts into the business.'" True again. If the editor keeps on he will be quoting Karl Marx—but no, he would never explain the last sentence so I must explain them both.

It is shown by the millions of unemployed always with us, that the supply of what the laborer "puts into the business" always exceeds the demand, therefore the price of labor power will always be at its lowest figure, for, by the law of supply and demand, we know that when the supply of commodity is greater than the demand it will be cheap and vice versa. As there is always a surplus of labor power caused by

the continual introduction of new labor saving devices throwing men out of work in every industry, labor power tends to always keep at its lowest price, i. e., wages tend to keep at the point of subsistence for the laborer.

"The wages of the laborer are fixed by the value of what he 'puts into the business,' his labor-power, which, like every other commodity, is determined by the cost of production, i. e., by the amount of labor socially necessary, under the existing condition, for its production—in this case for the production of the necessities of life to maintain the laborer and reproduce the race of laborers. As it takes the laborer only one-fifth of a day to produce value equal to the cost of the means of subsistence, he therefore receives the value of only one-fifth of the product of his labor in wages, for, as we have seen, the law of supply and demand and demand keeps his wages at the lowest notch. The employer gets the other four-fifths. Now, attention! The value of a day's product is five times as much as the value of the labor-power expended to produce it, because it takes only one-fifth as much labor to produce that labor power as that labor power set in motion for a whole day is able to produce. This is why the capitalist invests in labor power; because it is able to produce more value than it has itself, and thereby he is able to expand his capital—to make something out of nothing by taking the something the laborer has produced. It is by virtue of the capitalists' ownership of the means of production that the laborer is compelled to give four-fifths of his product to the capitalist in order to buy the use of these means to produce the necessities of life for himself.

Now here is just where the irrepressible conflict between the capitalist class and the working class comes in: It is to the interest of the working class to get as much of the value of what they produce as possible, (I might here interject that in justice it all belongs to them) and it is to the interest of the capitalist class to get as much of the value of this product as possible, therefore there can be no possible identity of interests between them. Every scale of wages is but a truce patched up between the opposing classes and must, sooner or later, end to give place to renewed and increased hostilities.

It is to the interest of the capitalists to get as much as possible for these products when they sell them, and it is to the interest of the laborers to pay as little as possible when they buy; again there can be no possible identity of interests and again the irrepressible conflict. The laborers are always opposed to the capitalists, either as sellers of labor power or as buyers of products.

The only thing that can end this conflict is for the producing class to become the owning class so that production and ownership of the production shall be in the same hands.

From the foregoing it is clear that there is an irrepressible conflict and that it must continue till one or the other of the classes is completely annihilated. This cannot be the working class, for this would mean the destruction of the human race. Should the present working class be annihilated, the capitalists would have to go to work or starve and, unless the system were changed, there would still be two classes; but on the other hand, if the workers triumph there will be only one class, the working class, and as one is no classes, there would be an end to class conflicts.

The only way the working class can triumph is by taking collective

ownership of the means of production; anything else would still mean a working class and an owning class and class conflicts. The new unionism will prepare the workers for collective ownership of the means of production.

"They (the signers of the manifesto) expect all who earn wages to join in overthrowing 'the wage system' and 'capitalism'—and why not? But the outcome is not likely to be according to expectations." Then why does the editor have an attack of what in another column he calls "Journalistic Gangrene?"

"A manifesto may be interesting reading, perhaps, but it has no magic power to transform many men of many minds into many men of one mind." Then why has the editor wasted so much valuable space in the Independent on this article? If it cannot transform men's minds, how is his article which uses scarcely any logical reasoning going to do it? But perhaps he writes for so much per, and that is why he uses the space.

"Sober-minded men who work for wages are not likely to join in destroying 'the wage system' until they have tolerably clear idea of what is to take its place." Sober-minded men are getting a tolerably clear idea that if they "destroy" the wage system they will be able to set up a system of their own choosing. Just here is where Debs & Co., are not weak. They all agree on what will take the place of the wage system. There may be slight differences on how to bring it about, but they are all agreed that the wage system will be replaced by collective ownership and democratic management of industry. As to the latter part of this (the last) paragraph, the editor should read up Socialism and the new trade unionism, or get the kinks out of his moral anatomy—as the case may be.

The editor says, "There is nothing natural, unless it is slavery, to take the place of the relation of employer and employee," thereby assuming that both slavery and the wage system are not man-made, but it is evident to any one who has given the question the slightest study that they are both products of different stages of society, that is of men collectively—that his assumption is absurd. "Any substitute must be an artificial contrivance." And pray, what are chattel slavery and wage slavery but artificial contrivances? That two or more can agree on an artificial contrivance is proven by corporations and trusts, to say nothing of governments, etc. An artificial contrivance does no more necessarily involve despotism than a natural one. Besides the coming society will be more natural than any that has obtained since civilization began. Under it the worker will receive the value of the full product of his labor, no more or no less; the veriest booby can see that this is nearer natural than chattel slavery, serfdom or wage slavery.

"There is not the least danger that all the workers will fall in and march with the Debs ranks." Then why all this grumbling of facts and fancy, or falsehood? If there is no danger, why does the editor have an attack of "Journalistic Gangrene?"

Yours for the truth and justice,  
CHARLES SCURLOCK.

Stark Mont., Feb., 28 1905.  
Comrade J. H. Walsh: Your letter to hand, and contents noted. Will say it is hard to get subs for the News here. The lumber-jacks have gone out and nothing doing. Hold on for a couple of months and I will be one to contribute \$5.00. I am starting up my placer works. The water is low yet. Best regards,  
Yours fraternally  
T. F. FABERT.

### S. L. P. Corrects An Error or Two

Butte Mont., Feb. 17 '05

Dear Mr. Walsh: Owing to absence from the city the first of the month I did not until day before yesterday see the News of Feb. 1, containing my letter and your reply.

Without wishing to overburden your column with controversy there are one or two points in your reply, which, if left unanswered would place the S. L. P., in a false light before your readers. In using the term "development" referring to your advance toward the S. L. P., position I did so, not from a sense of personal superiority, but from a consciousness of the superiority of the S. L. P., viewpoint. From the mountain top of Marxian Socialism, the humblest worker in the S. L. P., can observe intelligently, the movements and progress of those below, who have not yet emerged from the mists of bourgeois economies. His superior vantage ground of the scientists, whence the latter may readily see the fallacies, inconsistencies and contradictory attitudes of his unscientific opponents. Hence my use of the scientific term "development."

Regarding the Lord De Leon letter it was hard to escape the conclusion implied in my reference thereto, viz:—that since you, editor of a S. P., paper, published De Leon's letter without unfavorable comment, you thereby showed sympathy with the S. L. P., point of view on the important question of tactics discussed therein. In the circumstances, your silence spoke to me as eloquently as so many words of approval of DeLeon's answer to Ford.

As to the coming split in the Socialist party and the futur "line up," suggested in your editorial, "Will Go To S. L. P." your reply to the point I raise there (which was that your recognition of the S. L. P., as a "revolutionary, class conscious proposition" would make necessary your separation from the "opportunistic middle class elements" controlling the S. P.,) suggests a possibility I had not thought of before viz: that you simply intend to be an interested spectator of the "splitting up" process and not an active participant therein. In that case perhaps you and the News have not reached "the parting of the way." I am well aware that it is one thing to give intellectual assent to a proposition and another to stand on all the practical consequences of such assent. That is why I suggested the only consistent course for you to follow, provided you had arrived at the S. L. P., viewpoint viz: withdraw from the Socialist party, sever connections with the News as a S. P., paper and take your place in the ranks of the revolutionary army. That was the only way you could escape the contradictory attitude into which private interests would inevitably lead.

Certainly your objection to the S. L. P., on the plea that it is "not infallible" and "will need many improvements before the ushering in of the co-operative commonwealth," can have little weight even in your own mind. For if improvements are necessary in the S. L. P., before it will be as I claimed, "adequate for the emancipation of the working class," how infinitely more must be the improvements in the S. P., before it will even be on a level with the S. L. P., But bear in mind Mr. Editor

that the S. L. P., since its birth has progressed steadily toward a more nearly perfect revolutionary party, while as you yourself have testified, the S. P., has degenerated more and more into an "opportunistic middle class" party.

Finally Mr. Editor, you say you "would balk at the pope rule" in our organization that will not permit you or anyone else to publish as an official S. L. P., paper, a privately owned journal. Your language on this point sounds decidedly familiar. It is the invariable language held by every man, inside and outside the S. L. P., who has tried in vain to interpose his individual will and interests in opposition to the collective will of the party. The S. L. P., early insisted that "a revolutionary working class party must own its press," so that this most important of propaganda instruments might at all times give official expression to the principles and tactics of the party, without the danger of some individual's using this weapon—the press—against the party, in furtherance of his private interests. Such a press the S. L. P., has in the Daily and Weekly People, and in the German, Swedish, Jewish and Hungarian organs of the S. L. P.,—owned and controlled absolutely by the party. Far from the editors of these papers being "popes," they are subject to the directing authority of the national executive committee, and for cause may be removed at any time by referendum of the party membership. So the "pope rule" against which you "balk" Mr. Editor is a rule established, not by any individual but by the S. L. P., as a collective body.

More might be said on the evils of private journalism, as exemplified by the S. P. papers, which show that the real "popes" are in that party but space forbids. I leave the whole matter to the candid consideration of your readers. Meanwhile I am still a believer in the saying that "all things come to him who flattereth not and knoweth how to wait."

Yours for the S. L. P.,  
B. H. WILLIAMS.  
Member Section Butte, S. L. P.

The limited means and rush of work at this office for some few weeks has been the cause of delay in publishing the above letter; however the Montana News is always pleased to receive communications, and all will appear as soon as space, etc., will permit.

I shall only comment on a few of the points in the letter this time, and leave the matter for the reader to consider.

As to "developing," there is no doubt but the party is advancing. If the S. L. P., is not advancing, then it stands in the position of Mr. Coxe, of the noted "Coxey Army Fame," says that he is still where he was ten years ago, but that Bryan and Roosevelt have advanced to nearly that point. According to his own words Bryan and Roosevelt are to be commended while he is to be charged with laggard propensities.

I believe that our party is developing, and I also believe that the S. L. P., can still develop.

As to the paper, DeLeon, etc., and assuming that I have arrived at the parting of the way, if I understand you correctly, I would shut up the News, just walk out, lock the door, leave my subscribers and cred-

(Continued on page four.)